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ABSTRACT

The need for a revision of teacher evaluation standards is made clear, not only from the change in our society over the past 10 years but also from the new political and social demands placed on our school systems. Administrators, principals, and school officials are all experiencing this need for improving teacher evaluation. Because of collective bargaining, the teachers themselves are voicing their opinions on the need for change. The replacement of the existing subjective evaluation methods for both probationary and tenured teachers is the only recourse left for the improvement of our school systems. Some suggestions for revision of these evaluation methods include a) improvement of preservice teacher preparation programs with the emphasis on performance rating and field experience, b) greater involvement of experienced teachers in teacher education programs, c) refinement of teacher selection procedures through follow-up studies prepared by the school systems, and d) revision of certification and licensing exams to provide more objective tests for selection. (A four-item bibliography is presented.) (BRB)

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Teacher Evaluation-

A TEACHER UNIONIST'S VIEW

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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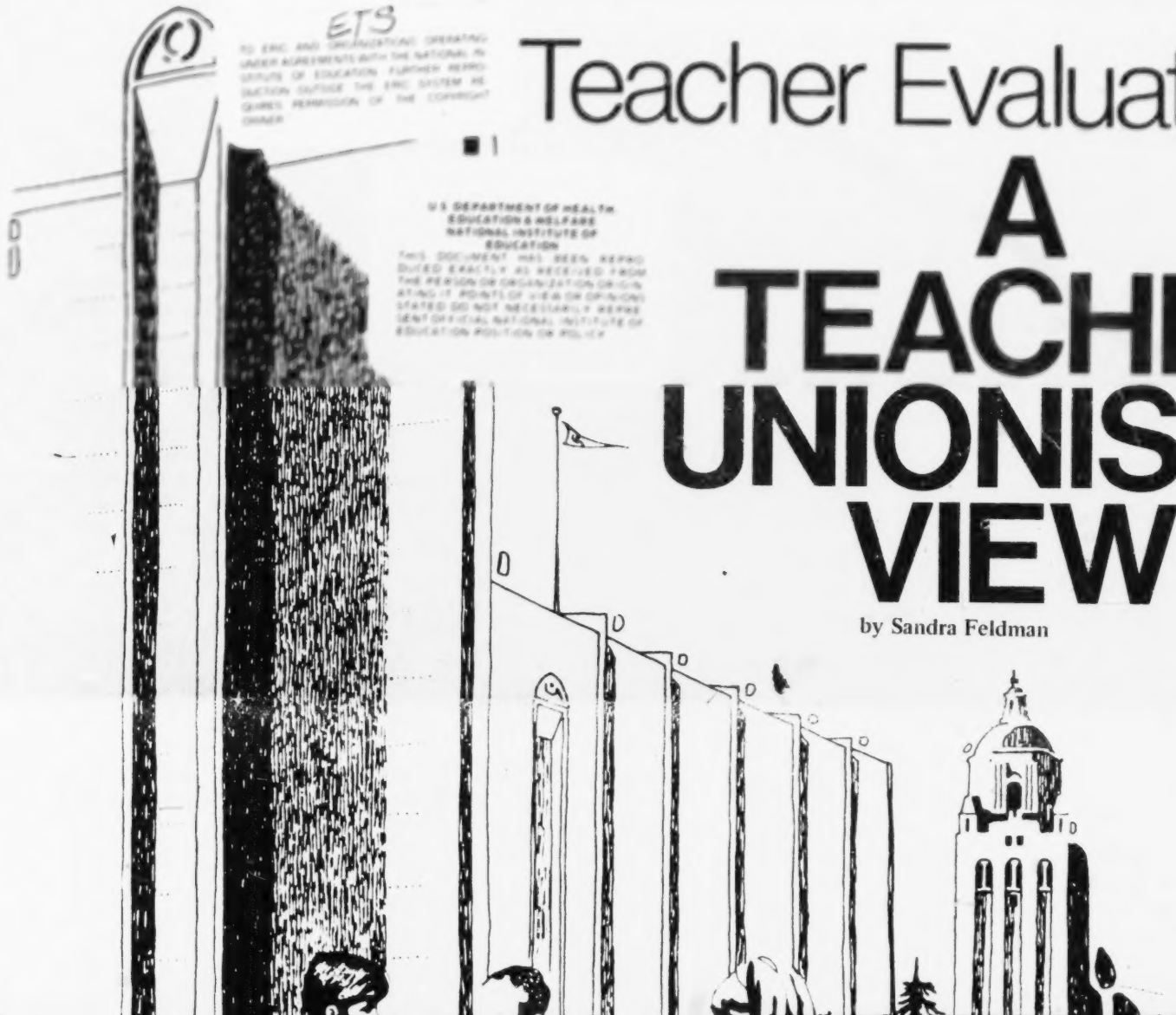

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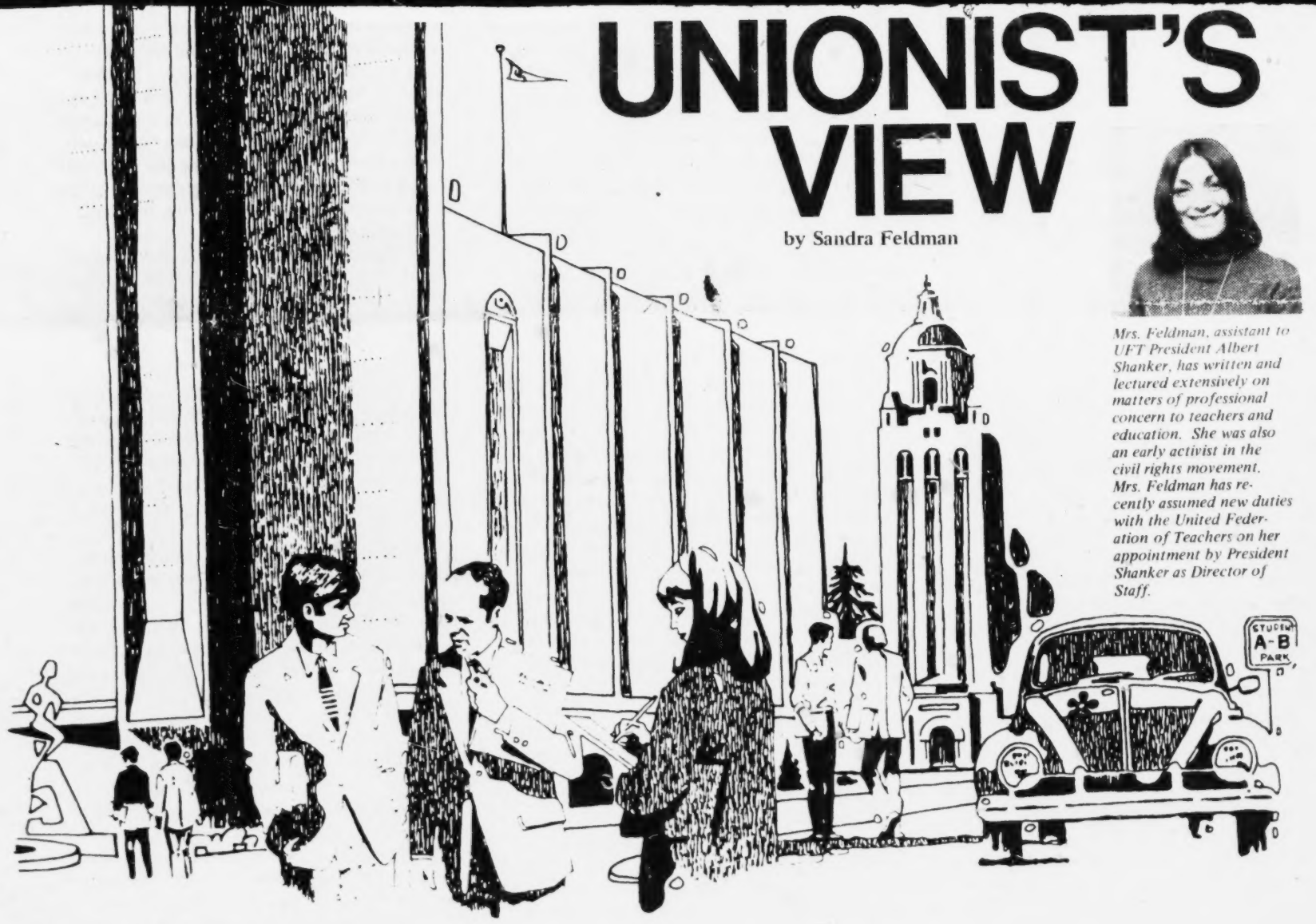

SP 007 546

Paper presented at the ETS Programs of Continuing Education Course: Inservice Teacher Evaluation at Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, November 27, 1972.
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It is only slightly more than a decade since teachers achieved collective bargaining after a one day strike in New York City. In 1960 the teachers' quest for power and dignity was supported and applauded by most of the public and particularly by the liberal press. In those days, teachers were looked upon by those who support "causes" as part of the "oppressed"; and indeed, to a large extent, they were. Salaries were low, working conditions were terrible, school administration was tyrannical at worst, paternalistic at best. Even the *New York Times*, never a friend of trade unionism, was on the side of the teachers' struggle for better pay and improved education.

In pre-collective bargaining days, school administrators had a great deal of arbitrary power over the everyday working lives of teachers, who were required to perform a wide variety of tasks unrelated to their teaching function, and who had nothing to say about their class assignments or the nature of the curriculum, let alone standards for hiring and firing and evaluation.

It took considerable adjustment — experiential learning, one might say — for administrators to

come to accept, as many have (though many still have not), such foreign and unspeakable things as contractual rights and grievance procedures, all of which curtailed their long-held prerogatives. The teacher-supervisor relationship has changed in many respects. Teachers are no longer timid or fearful. Armed with their contract and strengthened by the solidarity of a strong organization, they no longer can be arbitrarily assigned to toilet patrol; their preferences in assignments must be taken into account; they cannot be forcibly transferred or dismissed without cause and without the opportunity to bring in their union or association representatives as defense counsel. Administrators have acclimated to monthly consultation with teacher organization committees, to adhering to contractual provisions or facing a grievance, to a teachers' representative talking to him as an equal.

But there have been other kinds of changes as well. The public, for example, no longer pities the poor teacher. On the contrary, teachers, now considered – and not without reason – to have a good deal of power (although that power is much more limited than the previously sympathetic and now outright hostile editorial pages would have it), are faced daily with criticism, with attacks on their hard-won rights, and with blame – not only for the failure of the schools where they are teaching, but for countless social ills for which they are not responsible and over which they have no control.

Administrators find themselves caught up in the same maelstrom of school conflict. They are subject, in fact, in many cases, to even worse pressures. Superintendents long have been forced to play the game of musical chairs – out of one district and into another. And now principals often find themselves at the mercy of community and parents groups, with their jobs in continuing jeopardy if they displease one group or another. It is not without significance that last year the New York State Legislature, after a long, fairly bitter session, exempted principals from the right of tenure. Believe it or not, teachers did not applaud their bosses' loss of job security – for a principal without job security too often takes his desperation out on the hides of his faculty in attempting to shift the anger of parents, or the school board, or the community corporation, or some other group, from his back. "It's not my fault; the teachers' contract prevents me from doing what you suggest . . . " is a refrain we often hear from the principal too fearful to take proper responsibility

I do not for a moment want to appear insensitive to the problems of a school administrator placed in a rough political situation. I want simply to make two main points:

First, these kinds of pressures create very poor atmospheres for the running of schools. And second, precisely because they have such deep-reaching effects on the schools and particularly on the teacher – administrator relationships within them, we must understand them.

I believe it is important – essential – before turning to the substantive discussion of teacher evaluation, to discuss the dynamics of changing relationships in the schools, the political struggles and the strains the schools are under, where we are – and how we got to this point. Because even though the actual evaluative process and procedures have changed very little – which is a problem in itself which I will discuss at length later on – our subject and all of its latest ramifications cannot be clearly understood, in my opinion, without an understanding, an analysis, of the politics of schools. Furthermore, I am here, after all, not just as an educator, but as a teacher unionist, and for me this subject must be discussed from that perspective – an airing of which, I believe, will be of value to your deliberations.

A Brief Look at the Past Decade

In any discussion of almost any sensitive school issue – and teacher evaluation is certainly a sensitive issue – we cannot ignore the fact that for the past decade and longer, schools have been the scene of conflict, standing as they do as symbols, on the one hand, of "the establishment" and on the other hand as the vehicle for upward mobility for the underclasses. Whether or not the role of the schools as providing the path out of poverty has been mythologized – and that alone is an interesting subject – the fact is that working class and lower middle class parents attribute that role to them and place those expectations upon them.

During the early sixties, while teachers were seeking a greater voice, their movement was identified with, and teacher unionist were active in, the integrationist civil rights movement. The teacher union movement continued to grow, continued to succeed. The civil rights movement also had great successes – the civil rights acts of '64 and '66, the voting rights act of '65, the integration of public facilities throughout the South. But all those successes, while they raised expectations through-

Now, the solutions to unemployment, bad housing, poor health care can seem ephemeral, intangible. They require enormous political power, a consistent building of forces – votes – to overturn administrations, to elect a Congress. They require consistent, expert and painstaking lobbying. Job openings cannot be seen, touched, picketed, sat in. But schools are brick and mortar. They are in the neighborhood, approachable – and appear to contain within them not only the solutions to their own ills, but to a way out – out of poverty, out of slums, into the mainstream of society. They also contain within them educators – people, teachers in particular, who have made it into the mainstream by virtue of being paid to do a job in those schools, who fought successfully for the decent pay they receive to do that job – which in turn seems not to be getting done. Furthermore, schools are billion dollar operations. Some saw in them the opportunity for rebuilding broken patronage machines – or establishing new ones. There was the struggle over community control – a struggle which deeply involved the hiring, firing, and evaluation of educators.

And so, in the midst of growing social turbulence, with different groups organizing themselves for power, for a voice in decision-making – the poor, the taxpayers, the students, the parents, the teachers, etc. – and, in the ghetto, as Bayard Rustin has said, expectations rise faster and higher than conditions change; and in the working class and middle class increasing resentment as a result of an unjust tax system, an inflationary economy (resentment which manifested itself, in part, in defeat after defeat of school budgets) – the schools were immediately in the maelstrom of a storm of social protest.

It should not be misunderstood. I am not for a moment saying that school protest was totally unfocused or misplaced. It is true that thousands upon thousands of poor children are not learning, are leaving school unprepared either for work or higher education – a situation which has helped create what is popularly referred to as the "crisis in confidence" surrounding the public schools. A crisis in confidence, I must add, to which we as educators have contributed – not so much by our own failures as by our ever-willingness – as we should be – to point out our shortcomings in our efforts to highlight the need for educational improvement – as I am doing right now. We are much more hesitant, however, often too defensive, to talk about our successes, which are real and

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During the early sixties, while teachers were seeking a greater voice, their movement was identified with, and teacher unionist were active in, the integrationist civil rights movement. The teacher union movement continued to grow, continued to succeed. The civil rights movement also had great successes – the civil rights acts of '64 and '66, the voting rights act of '65, the integration of public facilities throughout the South. But all those successes, while they raised expectations throughout the minority communities, left basically unchanged the economic conditions of the poor, particularly in the Northern "inner cities". The joblessness remained; the unlivable slum housing remained; the disgracefully inadequate health care remained – and the poor conditions of the schools remained.

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There is no doubt that conflict in the schools, and vociferous criticism of education, has been nourished by the existence of widespread academic retardation. It has been caused, and contributed to in large part, by the changing social conditions I talked about earlier.

But the profession is responsible too, particularly for the feeling on the part of much of the public that anyone can teach – not because it has taught them so well, not because it is at fault for the inability of the schools to end academic retardation in poor areas – but because it has failed to put together a coherent and concrete body of knowledge about itself, about the teaching-learning process – a body of knowledge which can be coherently communicated and as tangible as medicine or law.

We are defensive not just because of our failures, which hurt us more than our most major successes gratify us – but because without that concrete body of knowledge we cannot defend ourselves.

There is a great sport common to the schools. I call it blame-placing. It used to be played this way: The public blamed the Board, the Board blamed the superintendent, the superintendent blamed his deputy, his deputy blamed the principals, the principals blamed the teachers. Now, we're in the new ballpark and what happens – at least what teachers feel is happening – is that everyone just blames the teachers. Administrators probably feel the same way.

So we have enormous social pressure on the schools for change, and at the same time an atmosphere of blame-placing and scapegoating. We have a situation in which schools in general and teachers in particular are bearing a great burden of blame for problems they cannot solve, problems caused largely by conditions over which they have no control. Teachers not only suffer the difficulties and strains of the classroom without adequate supports, they are accused of "insensitivity", they are caught in conflicts and power fights, they are constantly criticized, and they are ceaselessly bombarded with "innovations" and new schemes for "accountability" in which they are told they will be judged "objectively" – for example, on the basis of advancement in the standardized test scores of their students.

Or, educators are offered "solutions" like performance contracting, or vouchers. When those don't go over, some school critics, on the basis

In other words, forget about achievement. His conclusion, as you know, is that schools have little or no effect on the earning power of adults, and therefore really don't matter all that much. The attitude of an influential scholar, whose attitudes are shared by many school critics, should not be underestimated. They represent a terrible danger to the continued viability of public education. What they are saying – and government is all ears, especially at appropriations time – is "Give up on the schools."

If we are going to counter the attitude that schools don't matter; if, as educators we are going to save the schools – and I believe the job is left to us and we must do it – we must develop a knowledge base.

Now I want to talk about how little we know and how little effort we make in our school systems to know much more. It is in this context that we come to a discussion of teacher evaluation. I will start with the beginning teacher.

The Probationer

In the introduction to her tidy little book, Estelle Fuchs says:

> *"Teachers do not work in a vacuum. They are, very early in their careers, inducted into the ongoing social system of the school in which they work . . .*
>
> *"Whether or not there is professional growth and constructive teaching rather than disaster in the form of educational failure for inner city children is related not merely to the teacher's control over traditional methodology, as important as that is, but also to the institutional context of the school itself and the pressure it exerts upon the people within it."*[1]

Even if he has had student teaching, the new teacher finds himself in a very different situation of sudden and total responsibility for a class. The very logistics involved in a classroom of 25 or 30 pupils (if he's lucky enough to have so few) are frightening; the business of actually teaching them he cannot come to grips with at all until he establishes some authority and order. By authority and order I do not mean hands folded on desks and backs up straight, but a relationship between himself and his pupils, and among the pupils themselves, which allows for mutual respect. If he

year, demoralized and defeated. That is a problem for us as educators. We have no way of knowing how many of them might have made good teachers. But there is a bigger problem – the problem of those who are demoralized and defeated but do *not* drop out. What happens to them and why? Do they lack necessary skills? Do the school or classroom conditions account for the problem? Are there supports not provided which might help? Or is the entire situation beyond the teacher's – or the school's, perhaps – control?

Then there are the teachers – a majority – who *do* manage to establish that relationship, who do learn to teach, right there, in the classroom – usually through trial and error. In those classrooms, it appears that teaching and learning is going on – and for the most part, after some months or a year or two of experience, it *is* going on. At least to the uncertain extent that we can measure it.

Where is the administrator while all this is happening?

Usually, the new teacher meets him on the first day of school. The teacher is told that if he needs help, he should just ask for it. ("My door is always open" is a standard joke among teachers.) Of course, the last thing a new teacher will do is go to the principal and reveal his inadequacies.

In the first few days or weeks, the teacher probably sees his supervisor pass by his door several times. He may even be visited briefly and, depending on the supervisor and the state of the classroom, he may be either gently or strongly chastised, or he may be told his floor is dirty, his bulletin board is sloppy – or, he may be complimented; the lesson at the moment looks interesting, the children seem happy and orderly, the floor is clean, the bulletin board attractive . . . Maybe they'll meet again at a faculty conference. Perhaps there is an inservice training session after school or during lunch, which the teacher feels is just one more chore unrelated to his problems in the classroom. Or, perhaps in this school, atypically, there is some inservice training which actually has some value.

For the most part, the supervisor or administrator is harried, beset by paper work, parental complaints, community problems, cafeteria mix-ups and disruptions, accidents or assaults – one could go on. Even if he has been adequately prepared to help new teachers, he hardly has the time. He is much more the school administrator than the principal teacher – and most often this is

the inability of the schools to end academic retardation in poor areas – but because it has failed to put together a coherent and concrete body of knowledge about itself, about the teaching-learning process – a body of knowledge which can be coherently communicated and as tangible as medicine or law.

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Or, educators are offered "solutions" like performance contracting, or vouchers. When those don't go over, some school critics, on the basis of research which, instead of seeking answers seeks to establish that the schools make no difference anyway, decide to abandon the schools altogether as a place of learning. As one conclusion of his recent study of the schools ("Inequality"), Christopher Jencks said: "The primary basis for evaluating a school should be whether the students and teachers find it a satisfying place to be."

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Then there are the teachers – a majority – who *do* manage to establish that relationship, who do learn to teach, right there, in the classroom – usually through trial and error. In those classrooms, it appears that teaching and learning is going on – and for the most part, after some months or a year or two of experience, it *is* going on. At least to the uncertain extent that we can measure it.

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For the most part, the supervisor or administrator is harried, beset by paper work, parental complaints, community problems, cafeteria mix-ups and disruptions, accidents or assaults – one could go on. Even if he has been adequately prepared to help new teachers, he hardly has the time. He is much more the school administrator than the principal teacher – and most often this is not of his own making or choice.

Meanwhile, the teacher is developing other relationships in the school. He is recruited to the teachers' organization and is briefed on the nature of the school, its faculty, its administration. The teacher next door offers help – some materials, lesson plans, some knowledge of the youngsters from previous experience. In the coffee shop on

the corner or in the teachers' lunchroom he gets a variety of tips and advice. Usually, that is where he brings his teaching problems. And usually, that is where he finds aid. A very important kind of training takes place in this informal way. One of the greatest defects of our school systems is the lack of planned time, available during the school day for teacher-sharing – but I'll talk about solutions after I paint reality.

Sooner or later, before the end of the term, comes "the observation". Estelle Fuchs describes it, accurately in my opinion, this way:

"The ceremony is really very simple, although considerable time is spent by prospective supervisors learning how to conduct it, and much discussion is held concerning the significance of the variations possible in its execution. Essentially, the observation is similar from school to school, with some stylistic variations. Also, the first formal observation takes place at approximately the same time in the first semester, generally around the eighth or ninth week of teaching. The teacher is usually aware that she will be visited, although she may or may not know the specific time. In some situations the exact time of the observation is mutually agreed upon by the teacher and her supervisor. She may or may not be given a choice of subject to teach, but she usually has enough advance notice to prepare herself and the children for the event. The principal (or his assistant) arrives, and observes. He may or may not take part in the lesson; more usually he does not. Some controversy exists as to which is proper between those who feel that the supervisor should observe only and those who believe he should enter into the lesson. The observer leaves at the close of the lesson or sooner – leaving sooner is often disappointing to the teacher, who is taking this very seriously. He may make a few parting comments.

"Fairly soon afterward the principal conducts a conference with the teacher. Again there is variation in time and place, the purists arguing that the conference ought to take place within a few days, and in the more formal atmosphere of a conference room or principal's office. Those who engage in less formal lunchroom type conferences are viewed as behaving inappropriately. The critique and

"The ceremony also includes some instruction. The teacher is generally given a structure which her lesson should follow, with emphasis upon aim and motivation. She is frequently told not to repeat the children's answers or to call on a child before asking a question. She is encouraged not to use a loud tone of voice or attempt to cover too many things in one lesson. There are, generally, comments made about the physical appearance of the room, with emphasis placed upon displaying the work of children. These instructions help remove the mystery surrounding expectation of her behavior and make it possible to face future observations with less trepidation.

"During the course of the observation and subsequent conferences, the teacher has passed through an emotional crisis characterized by severe fear and nervousness, or a state of numbness. Many if not all teachers regard the observation as an ordeal through which they have to go. Having successfully passed through it, the teacher receives affirmation that she is 'on the right track,' that she is indeed a teacher recognized as such by her superiors.

"The observation is thus a ritual through which the teacher and the principal go. The ritual affirms the teacher's incorporation into the staff, and it also affirms her subordinate position in the staff hierarchy, for it reinforces the principal's right of inspection. The ceremonial takes place at different times during the teacher's career and with decreasing frequency as the teachers have been fully incorporated into their status and have learned the behavior appropriate to it without the need for constant surveillance."[2]

Recording the reactions of beginning teachers to "the observation", Fuchs gives us a Miss Harris, Class 4-2, in an inner city school. It too is worth hearing:

"The most important thing that happened to me in school this week concerns two letters which I received from the principal and assistant principal. These were in reference to visits made by these supervisors and their observations of my classroom, the children, and the subject matter which was being taught at the time they came into the room. Mrs. Ryan, the principal, had visited my class a week ago Friday for her observation and I had to speak to her Friday afternoon concerning the visit. However, this

"Mrs. Ryan's letter was very brief. The first line was very encouraging. It said that she had noticed a great deal of improvement in the children, especially in the discipline of the children. The remainder of course, was the one I mentioned last week that she had told me during our conference – I should never call on a person before I pose the question. I already explained why I did this – the idea of getting a child who is not interested and who is fooling around to listen to what I was saying. This was something I did all the time.

"The second criticism, however, I felt was a useful one. She said that I must remember not to repeat the children's answers, and I know that this is a fault of mine and I've been trying to work on it this week.

"The third was, of course, to see that all the children are sitting up tall and straight with their feet flat on the floor so that there's no wriggling around or tipping of chairs. This was about the complete letter that Mrs. Ryan sent."[3]

After the observation and the letter, at the end of the term, comes a rating form – different in different districts, but essentially the same throughout our schools, usually with a numerical rating on each item in a checklist. And, most important of all, a small slip with *the* evaluation – "S" for Satisfactory; "U" for Unsatisfactory, and a recommendation – continuance or discontinuance.

If you've got the "S" – you're doing fine. Breathe easy.

If you've got the "U" – you are in trouble; if you also have a "discontinuance", you are *really* in trouble.

So, what do you do?

A teacher can accept a U rating, and even separation from service. He will do that if he feels the supervisor is correct and he deserves what he's getting.

But very few teachers feel that way.

Most of them will go right to their teachers' organization for advice and aid. The representative *could* decide, on a review of the situation, that the evidence of incompetency is overwhelming, that the supervisor has followed all procedures properly, that the teacher has been given all the help possible, to no avail – and will advise the teacher to look elsewhere for a career. There actually are occasions when such advice is given.

They are few and far between. The evidence of

"The ceremony is really very simple, although considerable time is spent by prospective supervisors learning how to conduct it, and much discussion is held concerning the significance of the variations possible in its execution. Essentially, the observation is similar from school to school, with some stylistic variations. Also, the first formal observation takes place at approximately the same time in the first semester, generally around the eighth or ninth week of teaching. The teacher is usually aware that she will be visited, although she may or may not know the specific time. In some situations the exact time of the observation is mutually agreed upon by the teacher and her supervisor. She may or may not be given a choice of subject to teach, but she usually has enough advance notice to prepare herself and the children for the event. The principal (or his assistant) arrives, and observes. He may or may not take part in the lesson; more usually he does not. Some controversy exists as to which is proper between those who feel that the supervisor should observe only and those who believe he should enter into the lesson. The observer leaves at the close of the lesson or sooner – leaving sooner is often disappointing to the teacher, who is taking this very seriously. He may make a few parting comments.

"Fairly soon afterward the principal conducts a conference with the teacher. Again there is variation in time and place, the purists arguing that the conference ought to take place within a few days, and in the more formal atmosphere of a conference room or principal's office. Those who engage in less formal lunchroom type conferences are viewed as behaving inappropriately. The critique and comments follow a rather consistent pattern. Some negative things and some positive things are said about the conduct of the lesson. Sometime later, these comments are presented to the teacher in the form of a letter, duplicate copies of which are sent to the appropriate files and persons.

mystery surrounding expectation of her behavior and make it possible to face future observations with less trepidation.

"During the course of the observation and subsequent conferences, the teacher has passed through an emotional crisis characterized by severe fear and nervousness, or a state of numbness. Many if not all teachers regard the observation as an ordeal through which they have to go. Having successfully passed through it, the teacher receives affirmation that she is 'on the right track,' that she is indeed a teacher recognized as such by her superiors.

"The observation is thus a ritual through which the teacher and the principal go. The ritual affirms the teacher's incorporation into the staff, and it also affirms her subordinate position in the staff hierarchy, for it reinforces the principal's right of inspection. The ceremonial takes place at different times during the teacher's career and with decreasing frequency as the teachers have been fully incorporated into their status and have learned the behavior appropriate to it without the need for constant surveillance."[2]

Recording the reactions of beginning teachers to "the observation", Fuchs gives us a Miss Harris, Class 4-2, in an inner city school. It too is worth hearing.

"The most important thing that happened to me in school this week concerns two letters which I received from the principal and assistant principal. These were in reference to visits made by these supervisors and their observations of my classroom, the children, and the subject matter which was being taught at the time they came into the room. Mrs. Ryan, the principal, had visited my class a week ago Friday for her observation and I had to speak to her Friday afternoon concerning the visit. However, this week I received my formal letter from her. A copy of this letter, I believe, is sent to the district supervisor, another is kept in the school, another is given to me, and I'm not sure where the last copy goes.

"The second criticism, however, I felt was a useful one. She said that I must remember not to repeat the children's answers, and I know that this is a fault of mine and I've been trying to work on it this week.

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They are few and far between. The evidence of incompetence is rarely, if ever, overwhelming and the teacher *never* has received enough help on the job.

And yet, contrary to popular opinion, we are rarely able to overturn U-ratings or probationary dismissals. Probationers appeal their U-ratings

and dismissals to an in-house panel of supervisors, and despite our able defense, despite the usual shameful paucity of evidence either of incompetency or help given, that panel usually upholds their colleague supervisor. So, it may be a pain in the neck for supervisors to work up a dismissal case against a probationer – but it really doesn't take much over-exertion to do so. It is easy, procedurally, to "weed out incompetents" during the probationary period.

But substantively, what is incompetence? (I'm not even asking at this point how it's related to learning.) And who is incompetent? The professional being evaluated – or the evaluator?

Before we leave the probationer, I just want you to hear from Miss Winters, another of Estelle Fuchs' beginning teachers:

"When I went downstairs for lunch the principal came over to me and he took up most of my lunch hour telling me about the observation. He criticized me on two things. Number one, the way that I teach the words – which is by teaching both groups' words to the whole class. This is what I've been told to do in the reading course (I've been taking) and this was what the assistant principal told me to do and this is what I myself have found very effective. He criticized this, and the other thing he criticized is one of the drill games which I use and which I have also learned from this course. In short, the only things that he criticized me for were things that the assistant principal had told me to do and things which I had gotten from the reading course."[4]

The Tenured Teacher

Tenure is not a life-time guarantee of a job.

All it means is that if a teacher has worked satisfactorily for a given period, there is a point at which it is harder to fire him than it was during the previous period. That is, he now has available to him a real due process procedure – in almost all cases, required by state law, and in some, by contract.

In New York City we recently negotiated for teachers in their fourth and fifth year of probation (the legislature last year extended the probationary period from three to five years), the same procedure required by law for tenured teachers. In effect, we negotiated back the three year probationary period.

tem, the right to a hearing before an impartial trial examiner picked from a list approved by his union as well as by the Board and, finally, recourse to the courts or the Commissioner of Education.

What it means, practically, is that in order for a tenured teacher to be fired for incompetence, *his supervisors have to have very good evidence of his incompetence*. (There are, of course, other possible causes for dismissing teachers which are not the subject of our discussion, but they too should, and do, require substantial evidence.)

Very few tenured teachers are fired for incompetence. First – and we should not forget this in

teacher's classroom to document it;

(c) Know what to do in terms of aid and training when a teacher, in his opinion, exhibits incompetence;

(d) Document his own efforts to help the teacher;

(e) Show that his efforts at training and helping the teacher were valid, on the one hand, and to no avail on the other.

Since the evaluation of tenured teachers takes exactly the same form, for the most part, as the kind of evaluation I have already described for probationary teachers – "observations" and rating

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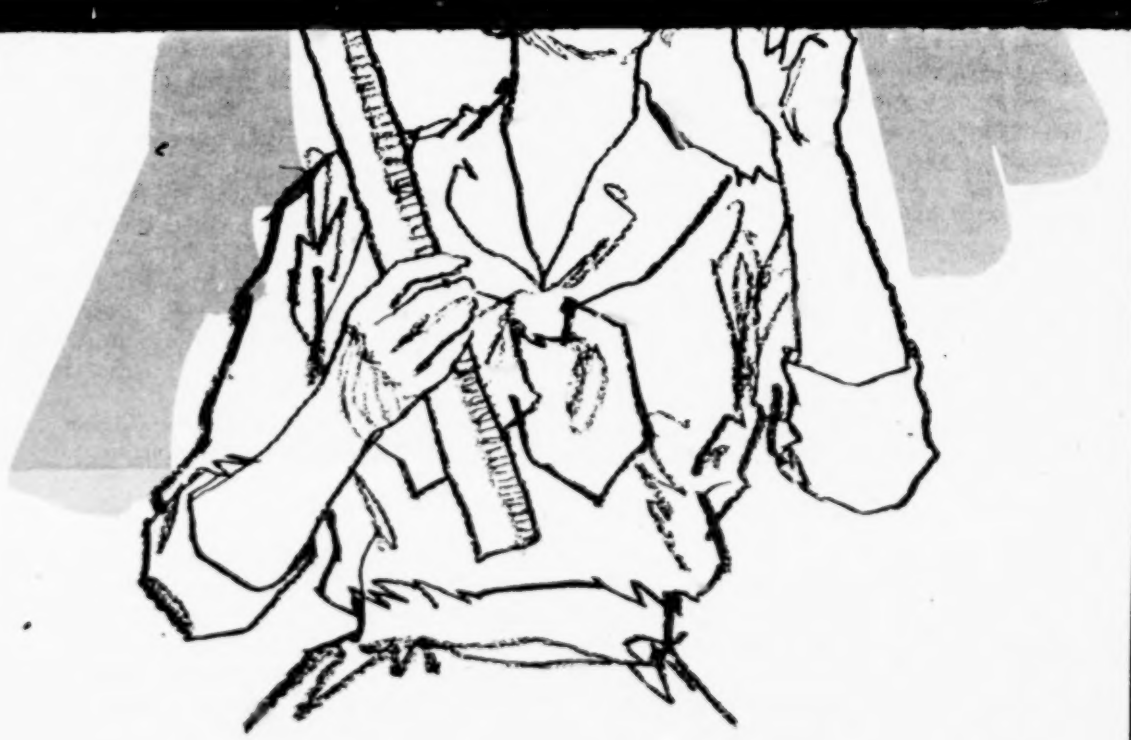

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In New York City we recently negotiated for teachers in their fourth and fifth year of probation (the legislature last year extended the probationary period from three to five years), the same procedure required by law for tenured teachers. In effect, we negotiated back the three year probationary period.

The procedure, briefly, (and it is probably similar in most states which have tenure laws) requires notice of charges in advance, gives the accused teacher right to counsel, the right to a copy of exact charges and "specifications", the right to cross examine opposing witnesses and to bring witnesses in his own behalf, and, after a series of hearings through the hierarchy of the school system, the right to a hearing before an impartial trial examiner picked from a list approved by his union as well as by the Board and, finally, recourse to the courts or the Commissioner of Education.

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Very few tenured teachers are fired for incompetence. First – and we should not forget this in a discussion of this sort – because within the limits of what we understand teaching competency to be, *most teachers who survive the classroom for three years or more are actually competent.*

Second, because in order for a supervisor to prove incompetence he has to:

(a) Know what it is;

(b) Spend a good deal of time in a teacher's classroom to document it;

(c) Know what to do in terms of aid and training when a teacher, in his opinion, exhibits incompetence;

(d) Document his own efforts to help the teacher;

(e) Show that his efforts at training and helping the teacher were valid, on the one hand, and to no avail on the other.

Since the evaluation of tenured teachers takes exactly the same form, for the most part, as the kind of evaluation I have already described for probationary teachers – "observations" and rating scales – this is very hard to do.

How to Respond?

Given all this, and given the political situation I described earlier, and the demands – understandable, justifiable – being made upon the schools and the profession for achievement – what is the response?

Communities bring pressure for more "accountability". Hare-brained schemes for the evaluation of professionals on a piece-work product basis come and go – and some, as in California, are enacted into law.

Supervisors and administrators would like to get rid of difficult due process procedures because they think it would make their job of weeding out incompetents easier.

Teachers feel that existing methods of evaluating are subjective, punitively oriented, based on the opinion of supervisors who do not know more about teaching than they do; are easily used in a discriminatory way against the outspoken, the non-conformers, the union activists, the "creative", and, last but not least, are unfair because pre-service teacher education is inadequate and in-service teacher education is poor – if not worthless.

Furthermore, there is confusion about the role of teacher evaluation in the schools. Is it to get rid of incompetents? Teachers want to do that as much as anyone – for they bear the brunt more than anyone when there are incompetent teachers in the school or in the system. Is it to judge performance only – or to improve teaching and education generally?

I feel the need to say a few positive words before going on. There are some good teacher education programs. I have seen a few, particularly those which are public school-based, where micro-teaching and video-tape and other such materials are used, where professors and principals and cooperating teachers and student teachers deal with each other in a non-threatening and fruitful way.

Therefore, believe it or not, despite what may sound to you like a very negative recital of ills – I am hopeful. I will lose hope only when I am convinced that educators – educators of teachers and of school administrators in particular – are unwilling to look closely and honestly at what is happening in our schools, as I have tried to do so far in this report. And I may lose hope if I do not see a movement away from the "off with their heads" approach to teacher evaluation and towards a view of teacher evaluation which is a total tailored evaluation. Or if the cacophony of criticism of the schools does not begin to include acknowledgement of successes.

I hope you will bear with me a little longer as I move from the critical to the constructive.

What Should Be Done

make it easier to get rid of people – *require less evidence of incompetence*, for example.

Or is our goal to improve instruction? If it is – and it is mine – then our job is a little more complicated. Each of the things we must do is dependent on the other things which must be done.

First, pre-service teacher preparation needs vast improvement. It must be made more relevant to the needs of the classroom. It must be more related to the ability of the teacher to perform. It must enable its graduates to demonstrate their competence with confidence.

The Performance-Based Teacher Education movement provides hope for moving in that direction – if it is not killed by the completely Neanderthal way in which most state education departments – including and probably particularly New York's – are going about changing requirements to push universities and colleges towards their (the State Education Department's) own peculiar understanding of Performance-Based Teacher Education. For the most part, teacher education institutions are being asked to change their program to performance-based programs despite the fact that no one knows yet which teacher behaviors effect what learning, and how. In addition, state education departments are changing certification requirements to performance-based – before standards are developed and before competencies are validated. This is being vigorously opposed by the teacher organizations and by most sensible and intelligent teacher educators.

Now, teacher education institutions can do a great deal. They should be involved in research and development as they evolve performance-based, field-centered programs. They can be developing models of teacher performance based on available knowledge, utilizing some of the very limited research and the opinions of experienced classroom educators. And they can be planning comprehensive research to test those models so that the changes they make are based on real knowledge – not on guesses and not on what looks good in a catalogue or brochure.

Second, changes in selection procedures should also be made – but, again, not based on ignorance. So far, we have absolutely no way of knowing whether a teacher candidate will be a good teacher. The fact that he has completed a college program doesn't tell us. An interview, no matter how well conducted, doesn't tell us. An examination, while valuable for telling us whether the candidate can to do it to the extent possible. We should be following up to see whether groups of teachers who have been licensed or certified in particular ways are performing satisfactorily, whether a particular preparation program or inservice program or selection procedure is related to that performance in any way. School systems themselves should be doing this; should have the capacity and resources for it.

We have had a great deal of controversy over examinations for licensing in New York City, and examinations for licensing supervisors have been stopped by the courts. Judge Mansfield, in enjoining the examination did not say, as most people think, that the exams were discriminatory. He said that in the absence of evidence of their predictive validity, and given the relatively small numbers of Blacks and Puerto Ricans who pass them, their continuance could not be justified in the face of charges of possible discrimination.

So, the exams were ended, and we have had instead widespread favoritism and discrimination in the hiring of supervisors throughout New York City. No one will ever know for sure whether the change has affected school performance positively or negatively, because no effort is being made along those lines.

The problem of just and meaningful selection procedures is not a large city problem. A look around the country will demonstrate that in the absence of objective standards, discrimination, however subtle, takes place – and to a degree it never did under the merit system in New York City, where minority group after minority group made it into the school system by virtue of an objective examination system. (In fact, one of the last supervisory lists, enjoined by Judge Mansfield, contained the names of over 200 Black and Puerto Rican candidates.

Changes in selection procedures are needed. State certification, where examinations have not been required, has been totally inadequate – as inadequate as the "approved" teacher education programs on which that certification is based.

Examinations are under attack and are difficult to defend without evidence of their validity.

But selection procedures, certification and licensing procedures should not be changed on the basis of ignorance merely because there is great political pressure for change. In fact, the highly political situation schools operate under should make us very careful. We should have a selection procedure which is rigorous and objective. Those

about teaching than they do, are easily used in a discriminatory way against the outspoken, the non-conformers, the union activists, the "creative", and, last but not least, are unfair because pre-service teacher education is inadequate and in-service teacher education is poor – if not worthless.

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Before offering solutions, we must decide on our goal. Is it to get rid of a high percentage of teachers each year on the assumption that a "shape up or ship out" atmosphere in the schools will make things better? If so, then all that needs to be done is to figure out some procedures which

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I have grave doubts as to whether we will ever be able to achieve "predictive validity" of selection procedures – but I am in favor of trying

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But selection procedures, certification and licensing procedures should not be changed on the basis of ignorance merely because there is great political pressure for change. In fact, the highly political situation schools operate under should make us very careful. We should have a selection procedure which is rigorous and objective. Those who argue for a lowering of standards or the discontinuance of examinations altogether so that more minority group candidates can be certified, are not merely making what I consider to be a racist argument because it is based on the assumption that Blacks and Puerto Ricans or other minor-

ities are less intelligent or able; they are also seeking a subjective system which is of greatest danger to those very groups on whose behalf they demand it. It *is* – has always been – in the interest or minorities to have selection based on objective standards and merit.

What we need is to make those standards meaningful by basing them on carefully researched and proven knowledge. After all, we have always had standards in education – not only for selection, but for evaluation.

And here I am, at last, getting to evaluation.

Standards have always existed. We have had long checklists for a long time. Those standards have been criticized since time immemorial – for being too general, for being too specific. The real problem with them is that they have not been rooted in a knowledge base backed up by careful research and so they have had nothing to do with instructional improvement.

And teachers usually have no idea what the standards are. When actually they should not only know what they are, they should be involved in establishing them. They should have the knowledge, skills, tools, conditions by which to meet them. They should have confidence in both the standards and the evaluatory system. They should be convinced that there is a knowledge base and that it is a sound one.

They should be evaluated for what they know and for those parts of the educational totality over which they have control. They should be evaluated not on the basis of achievement test scores of pupils – which involve many other factors besides teacher input – but on the basis of their own behavior *in the context of knowledge about which teacher behaviors or skills or competencies effect learning.*

As yet, we do not have comprehensive and systematic evidence that any one teaching methodology is superior to any other. We have no conclusive evidence that teachers with x or y particular skill or competency will elicit x or y learning response. Our knowledge is limited and there are grave signs throughout the country that a new fad called "competency-based" is the next educational "innovation". We must not let that happen as it has happened so many times before.

Attempts to apply – simplistically and ignorantly – the management skills developed by business from a very influential – for its time – pamphlet by Franklin Bobbitt of the University of Chicago, as follows:

". . . 'it is possible to set up definite standards for the various educational products. [He means students. S.F.] *The ability to add at a speed of 65 combinations per minute, with an accuracy of 94 percent is as definite a specification as can be set up for any aspect of the work of the steel plant . . . (Most teachers) if asked whether his eighth grade pupils could add at the rate of 65 combinations per minute with an accuracy of 94 percent, could not answer the question . . . He needs a measuring scale . . . (and) having these definite tasks laid upon her, (sic) she can know at all times whether she is accomplishing the things expected of her or not. She can herself know immediately whether she is a good teacher, a medium teacher, or a poor teacher . . . (and the supervisor would then have) incontestable evidence of inefficiency against the weak teacher . . .' "* [5]

It was around the same time, and as a result of the same pressures and influences, that checklists or rating scales were developed to eliminate "arbitrary personal opinions" from ratings – which then contained such items as "integrity and sincerity", "enthusiasm and optimism", "sense of justice". These "skills" were to be rated "very poor", "poor", "medium", "good", or excellent".[6]

What happened then set the basis for many of the inadequacies and absurdities we are facing now, for as Callahan correctly points out, leading educators were making:

". . . impressive scientific-appearing presentations while ignoring more profound considerations . . . Perhaps an awareness of the difficulty of the task and of the skill and training necessary for the research work would have made the situation more difficult for them in 1913, but it would have contributed to the study of education in the long run . . . (but) Few educators saw the need, and neither the research skill nor the money was available.

"Under the circumstances, however, these facts were not important. Schoolmen were responding to criticism and the critics were of science'. The change, he said, made little difference 'except for advertising purposes.' " [8]

We must not repeat this sad history. Plans for changing and strengthening teacher evaluation must be accompanied by meaningful research. We do not have to wait, to do nothing until research is completed. We can and should develop teaching models based on the limited available research and on the opinions of experienced classroom teachers – and we can move ahead with those as long as a research design is built in and carried on simultaneously with the development. And such efforts must include the establishment of substantive programs such as teacher internships, so that beginning teachers, instead of learning by trial and error on the job, are given only half a classload in the first year and three-quarters in the second, with the rest of the time spent working with experienced teachers and in relevant in-service training.

In New York City, the United Federation of Teachers has been offering a series of "mini-courses". These are courses given by classroom teachers. They are brief two or four hour sessions on specific methods and techniques, and they are attended enthusiastically by large numbers of teachers, despite their having no credits attached.

I want to emphasize also that teacher evaluation must not be done in a vacuum. Plans must be made for taking a good, hard look at the entire school program, such as is proposed in the design for "Accountability in the New York City Schools" prepared by Educational Testing Service. We should be attempting to evaluate the total school, taking into account the school environment, the administration, the curriculum, etc., as well as teacher performance, and we should be comparing schools operating under similar conditions in an effort to learn why some appear to be – or are – more effective than others. This should be done not solely for identifying incompetence – a good but negative objective – but for finding out what works in education so it can be applied and expanded.

Before I summarize and conclude, I want to make a plea – no, a demand, really:

Experienced classroom teachers must be involved fully in the development

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Attempts to apply – simplistically and ignorantly – the management skills developed by business and industry have gotten the schools into trouble before. In the early 1900's the whole notion of "efficiency" was very popular in education. Time and motion studies were being suggested for the schools and they have a frighteningly familiar ring.

In a book I recommend highly, Raymond Callahan's *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, there is a chapter called "American Educators Apply the Great Panacea". It deals with efforts that were being suggested to very specifically define the processes and products of education. It quotes

tion . . . He needs a measuring scale . . . (and) having these definite tasks laid upon her, (sic) she can know at all times whether she is accomplishing the things expected of her or not. She can herself know immediately whether she is a good teacher, a medium teacher, or a poor teacher . . . (and the supervisor would then have) incontestable evidence of inefficiency against the weak teacher . . .'" [5]

It was around the same time, and as a result of the same pressures and influences, that checklists or rating scales were developed to eliminate "arbitrary personal opinions" from ratings – which then contained such items as "integrity and sincerity", "enthusiasm and optimism", "sense of justice". These "skills" were to be rated "very poor", "poor", "medium", "good", or excellent".[6]

What happened then set the basis for many of the inadequacies and absurdities we are facing now, for as Callahan correctly points out, leading educators were making:

". . . impressive scientific-appearing presentations while ignoring more profound considerations . . . Perhaps an awareness of the difficulty of the task and of the skill and training necessary for the research work would have made the situation more difficult for them in 1913, but it would have contributed to the study of education in the long run . . . (but) Few educators saw the need, and neither the research skill nor the money was available.

"Under the circumstances, however, these facts were not important. Schoolmen were responding to criticism and the critics were not interested in genuine research. They wanted to reduce, or at least to prevent an increase in school taxes and they wanted to be assured that their schools were being operated efficiently, i.e., that they were getting the maximum return for their expenditure." [7]

Sound familiar? What was also familiar was the protest against all this by teacher unionists, led by John Dewey:

"He charged that much of the 'scientific' work being done was not really scientific in the sense of inquiry into processes, but merely the same old education 'masquerading in the terminology

of substantive programs such as teacher internships, so that beginning teachers, instead of learning by trial and error on the job, are given only half a classload in the first year and three-quarters in the second, with the rest of the time spent working with experienced teachers and in relevant in-service training.

In New York City, the United Federation of Teachers has been offering a series of "mini-courses". These are courses given by classroom teachers. They are brief two or four hour sessions on specific methods and techniques, and they are attended enthusiastically by large numbers of teachers, despite their having no credits attached.

I want to emphasize also that teacher evaluation must not be done in a vacuum. Plans must be made for taking a good, hard look at the entire school program, such as is proposed in the design for "Accountability in the New York City Schools" prepared by Educational Testing Service. We should be attempting to evaluate the total school, taking into account the school environment, the administration, the curriculum, etc., as well as teacher performance, and we should be comparing schools operating under similar conditions in an effort to learn why some appear to be – or are – more effective than others. This should be done not solely for identifying incompetence – a good but negative objective – but for finding out what works in education so it can be applied and expanded.

Before I summarize and conclude, I want to make a plea – no, a demand, really:

> Experienced classroom teachers must be involved fully in the development of any program for evaluation of professionals, or of schools, or for changing teacher training programs. First, because they have a great deal to offer; second, because their very involvement will lead in the process to improvement of their own teaching.

Here are some excerpts from comments made by experienced teachers who participated in a two day workshop run by the City University of New York last summer as the first step in the development of competencies to be used for a

teacher training model. In cooperation with the CUNY effort, UFT recruited over 300 teachers for these workshops. The teachers were paid $50 per day for two days of participation:

"I have been teaching for 20 years. This is the first opportunity I have had to listen to and express my ideas on teacher training and competencies."

"This is also my first opportunity to share ideas with junior and senior high school teachers."

"I feel that talking with teachers from all over the city broadened my perspective. The idea of thinking over what qualities a competent teacher needs not only organized my thoughts on this matter, but helped me to better see my strengths and weaknesses in terms of the criteria we were discussing."

"Personally, I feel as a teacher, that I derived significant benefits by participating in the workshops. I was forced to think out in a concrete way my role and skills as a teacher, which should act as an impetus for my own professional growth."

"It was a valuable experience for me since I was forced to analyze myself and think of what really makes a good teacher and I was able to learn from others."

"I feel that the 'competency based teaching project' is a necessary one. The two days have forced me to face myself as a teacher and evaluate what is essential for 'competent' performance in a classroom."

"I came away from these two days more optimistic about the future of education. Also, I met many nice people."

"It is most encouraging to note that the universities are looking toward the people who are working and facing problems in order to get suggestions to improve teacher training. I feel that this has been a most worthwhile undertaking. It is high time an emphasis was put on specific competencies rather than abstract theories! Thank you for asking me."

"A program like this is the most valuable way of finding out what a 'competent' teacher really is. We all remember vividly our own experiences so we are willing to do what we can to help new teachers."

"This experience has renewed my spirit about teaching . . . I felt needed, wanted, involved – and well paid."

In Conclusion

Schools exist in a social and political reality which must be considered and understood by those involved in educational change. Changes in teacher evaluation which take place in an "off with their heads" atmosphere and in the context of school budget-cutting and job shortages will be viewed with suspicion – and justly – by teachers and their organizations. We have learned from history, even if others have not.

There are no "procedural" solutions to improving teaching. For the most part, adequate procedures for weeding out incompetents exist; they are hard for administrators to use primarily because no one really knows what incompetence is – except in extreme cases – and the processes for evaluation now used rely primarily on subjective opinion rather than on proven knowledge.

As teacher unionists, we are vitally interested in better education. Because we are, we will insist that the much-needed, time-consuming, massive research be done to find out what we need to know about teacher behavior and its effects on learning.

We will press for the necessary funds for that research and we will demand that teachers have a meaningful voice in its direction.

We will continue to support the establishment of an on-the-job internship for teachers – whatever their pre-service teaching was.

We will continue to defend teachers subjected to the vagaries and uncertainties of current evaluation procedures.

We will continue to support non-discriminatory high standards for entry into the teaching profession.

And we will cooperate with those institutions which are seeking educational solutions in a meaningful and knowledgeable way.

We are interested in change – we want it – but we have seen too much of change for change's sake. We want educators to stop reinventing the wheel; to stop introducing with great fanfare, one rehashed innovation after another.

We will do our best to see to it that for once in education, change is based on substantive and proven knowledge instead of on public relations and guess work.

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1. Estelle Fuchs, *Teachers Talk* (Anchor Books, Doubleday, New York, 1969) p. xiii
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3. Ibid, p. 153
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7. Ibid, pp. 93-94
8. Ibid, p. 125

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